17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

is a most important grouping intermediate between the compound family and its individual members. It is a semi-autonomous domestic unit with its own kitchen economy, its own property rights in cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, land, tools, granaries, and food stocks. Correspondingly it is responsible for its own building and repairs, fuel and water collecting, food provision and allocation from harvest to harvest, and has its own sexual rights and obligations. But the husband is an element common to them all, and, having his own rights and duties in respect of these matters, binds them closely together. Livestock are herded co-operatively, not only for all the elementary families of a homestead, but for several homesteads together. The husband is the senior head of a corporate group, not an absolute rightholder.[1] He allocates land, cattle, and other property accruing to the compound family group among its elementary families, and this allocation limits the proportion in which it will eventually be inherited by the sons in each elementary family. He is also able to make levies of property for special purposes from all his elementary families. But in all situations involving social groups wider than the homestead, its head is subject to the decisions of the leaders-in-council of the lineage segment to which he belongs. The exclusiveness of elementary families is potentially high, but in practice depends on the skill of the homestead head in securing and maintaining harmony, and on the natural compatibility or otherwise of co-wives. When these factors favour, co-wives may be seen co-operating in many tasks, taking it in turns to supply the husband—or one another's children—with food, combining as a team for garden work, or sharing one another's water-supply. But it cannot be denied that the Luo regard friction between co-wives as being a more normal state of affairs. Behind these situational variations lies the inviolable right of the husband to regular cooked food from each wife, of each wife to regular sexual attention from the husband, and the general responsibility of each elementary family for its own self-maintenance granted the rightful assistance from the husband in his proper part of each task.

The rearing of children is woven into this framework. The baby's first contacts are naturally with its mother, who may not finally wean it till it is about two years old, unless as a result of a subsequent pregnancy she has to do so sooner; for suckling a child with a youngster sibling in the womb is regarded as robbing and endangering the latter. The baby sleeps in its mother's hut at night and sleeps and later plays near it during the day. It is more closely associated with the other members of its own elementary family, especially the female ones circling round the hearth for the preparation and cooking of food. Other members of the compound family will be hardly less well known from their presence together inside the homestead hedge, but all non-members of the homestead will be comparative strangers except very close relatives or near neighbours who are constant visitors within it.

Babies of either sex are not seen much out in the charge of one of the older unmarried girls, probably a real or classificatory sister. This brings them in contact with the world outside the homestead, where a number of these nurse-girls (*Dhodhos jopiel*) meet regularly in informal play groups. By the time children can run about on their own they too form play groups, including both girls and boys from several homesteads. Gradually the interests of the two sexes diverge, the boys going off with

[1] The Luo homestead in all phases of its lifecycle would contain the subdivision of a corporate group in Weber's sense. See *Theory of Political and Economic Organization*, p. 139.

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
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the local prophet (*jubilo*). When he returned to the village from his visit to the *jubilo*, he cursed his wife as follows: "I wish the disease which killed my heifers would kill you, my wife, for your daughter is a whore who has brought the disease of her womb to my cattle." From the evidence, the woman seemed to have planned her death carefully. She made her daughters swear that they would not be married to anyone who would ever give her husband cattle. She distributed all of her belongings to them and placed a curse on the village to the effect that her husband should never be able to marry another wife. She then entered her house and hanged herself.

Since that time, the Luo pointed out, his daughters have all eloped with persons who have not paid bride-wealth and no other woman has ever consented to marry him or to live with him.

The next case is typical of many which involve jealousy at the taking of a second wife, especially without the first wife's permission, or as in this case, expressly against her wishes. My informant was living near the village where the suicide took place and his mother became involved in it. The story was told to me in his mother's presence and she helped with the details.

Suicide Case No. 18.

A man, Okech, who was happily married, invited his wife's sister, Apolo, to come to live at his homestead to act as a nurse-maid for their first child.*

* This is common practice among the Joluo and often the "nurse" (*japidi*) is later married by her brother-in-law, especially if the sisters co-operate and agree to be happy together. Frequently the *japidi* will form a strong attachment to her brother-in-law, and marriage becomes desirable or even necessary. If a man marries a *japidi*, she becomes known as *ngeri ateko*, the wife of the same blood, and the children of both wives share the same hut and trace descent through the elder sister. The term *ateko* is also used to describe a girl given to replace a sister who was unable to bear her husband a son; it therefore does have a slight connotation of stigma.

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INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

Feedwo

Under one year. For the first month of a baby's life its chief food is its mother's milk. But when the mother's milk is insufficient, gruel may be given as early as at two to three weeks old. Although cow's milk is now sometimes used instead of gruel, it is still chiefly regarded as a modern introduction by the missionaries in an effort to promote infant health.

Between the ages of one and three months, gruel and breast-feeding play about equal parts. When the mothers go out to work, suckling tends to be limited to mornings and evenings. The average age at which babies are given gruel is one month. From the third to the sixth month milk from the breast and gruel continue to form the child's main diet, but after this, gruel begins to prevail over breast-feeding. Although maize flour is occasionally used in the preparation of gruel, the usual flour for this purpose is obtained from sorghum and eleusine, a species of millet. Whenever possible a little sour milk is added to the mixture. Between five and six months certain children have frequent tastes of adult food given to them by their nurses.

Although nurses are allowed to give gruel to the children, difficulties in handling a baby sometimes result in under-feeding, which is often made worse by the low food-content of the gruel itself. Through training by nurses, babies are accustomed to adult food before their mothers actually give it to them, so it can happen that

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853 when a mother is eating she will hear her child cry out
[154] for some of her food.

From six to nine months, gruel continues to be the staple article of diet. In certain strict families adult food is not given until the child is over a year old. Babies fed on cow's milk begin using adult food during the first or second month.

[784] *Restrictions on the suckling of babies.* It is considered a
[761] breach of taboo for a nursing mother to suckle her neighbour's child. This restriction is based on the fear
[177] that some woman with poor milk may, in suckling a baby, kill it. One of my informants pointed out that in the early days of missionary work an attempt to break this taboo had failed. She said that many of the children thus suckled had died, and the attempt had been aban-
[609] doned. One exception to the restriction, however, is that of a mother-in-law. In cases of necessity she is permitted to suckle her daughter-in-law's child because it is assumed that her milk has stood the test.

853 In rare instances there seems to be different treatment
595 of male and female children in a polygamous home with regard to suckling. Some of my informants stated that inter-suckling is permitted if all the nursing mothers have female babies.

[587] Nevertheless, the taboo against inter-suckling of male babies is reinforced by the fact that it is possible for a son to marry one of his father's younger wives. Hence a woman refuses to suckle a child who might become her husband on the death of the father.

853 The social restriction with regard to the suckling of
[177] infants is still observed with rigidity, and there are no evidences of a change even under the impact of modern ideas.

Methods of feeding. No force is used in feeding young babies. A little gruel in a small container is put to the

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lips. The mouth is gently raised while a small amount of the gruel is let in. Forcible feeding takes place when children begin to push the container from their lips, preferring their mothers' milk. 853

In forcible feeding, the child's head is rested against the mother's breast while the feet are firmly held in position between her thighs. If the child is difficult to manage, an assistant may be called to hold its hands. The mother rests the edge of the left hand below the child's lips and pours gruel in the hollow thus formed by the hand. While the child is crying, she closes the nostrils by pressing its upper lip against the openings. Thus in attempting to draw air through the mouth the child takes in a mouthful of gruel. The mother or the nurse may then dip her hand in cold water and wipe the child's abdomen in an attempt to cool the rapidly-swallowed food. After it has drunk a considerable quantity the child is set free. If the mother is present, it may finally be pacified by a short period of suckling.

Although women insist on this form of feeding because of its traditional value, it is also a method they use when they are in a great hurry. To have time to do their other work they must feed their children as quickly as possible. A child which has been given gruel does not cry for food for a long time.

The feeding of younger children is generally left to nurses, though often they are very young and lack experience by European standards. Sometimes a child may be found unconscious through over-feeding or prolonged choking. When this occurs, a responsible person holds the child by the legs, head downward, and then runs with it, shaking out the contents of its stomach; after which the child is laid down in a cool place to regain its strength. In extreme cases the child may die. Some children are quite unable to take gruel, and in [854] [957]

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153 such circumstances they have to depend on their mothers' milk.

Although the time and nature of her work may force a woman to feed her child at certain hours, there is otherwise no fixed time for feeding babies. If the mother is present, the child is suckled whenever it wants to. Thus babies having such treatment grow up with a particularly strong liking for their mothers' breasts. As soon as a baby is big enough, the mother begins to limit her suckling and to increase the frequency of gruel-taking. The frequency of suckling is greater for babies between one and three months, the intervals increasing with the age of the child. Daily absence of the mother when she is working at a distance may also impose longer intervals between the successive sucklings than would be the case if the mother were nearby, or within the village. Chil-
[177] dren in more enlightened families are started on cow's milk after one or two months, and are given gruel after six months.

There is a widespread belief that gruel strengthens the bones, and therefore should be a very important article of diet just before the child begins to walk.

Cleanliness

• 154 There is a general slackness in the washing of children by Luo mothers, which increases as the children grow older, but sometimes, especially among the more ad-
[178] vanced people, they are kept tidy regularly. It may be of interest to know that, in the past, they were washed early every morning in cold water in the belief that this would make them strong. Whenever the children empty their bowels they are cleaned with old rags or soft leaves. The limited supply of old rags makes the use of leaves more common.

Bedding and clothes. No clothes are especially made for the babies.

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856 constant help from the mother, the nurse, and other members of the family, the child is able to sit up without support.

[854] The practice of straddling the child on the hip begins during the sixth month. From this period there is a rapid development of its manipulative skill. Between the seventh and eighth months the child begins to crawl about on the floor, and will crawl away from wherever it is seated. As the child's manipulative skill develops he begins to pick up things that attract the eyes, often knocking them down repeatedly. The mouth is also used in testing the properties of articles. There is thus some difficulty in preventing the child from putting dirty things into its mouth.

If a child is not watched it may eat a large quantity of soil, a practice facilitated by its surroundings, the floor and ground in front of the house being bare earth. It is [164] therefore not surprising that children of this age frequently suffer from serious stomach trouble. Even before [854] the children begin to sit up, the nurses, who themselves [857] are only between six and eleven years old, do not effectively prevent them from touching dirty things, because they are sometimes tempted to run away to play, leaving the babies to look after themselves.

856 A child is persuaded to walk by holding its hands and 868 helping it along. In this process the older person repeats the words 'Taa, taa,' in a monotone. The practice is continued daily until the child is able to walk; but as soon as it can support itself on its feet the mother or nurse may move away a short distance and try to induce it to come nearer. Every member of the family takes a great interest in all this and loses no opportunity to help the child.

According to my observations, cooing and the earliest symptoms of speech begin to come into evidence in the

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857 ing interest in her body and in the opposite sex. It may
856 be said that the loss of concern for her charge and concentration on herself is a sign announcing the emotional disturbances of adolescence. Young girls of this age now

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NURSE: AYOMA

857 consider nursing beneath their dignity, and their revolt
856 is encouraged by increasing association with members of the opposite sex who would disdain talking to a child-nurse.

855 *Feeding.* The girls of this age group eat normal adult
264 food, at the same time as adults, but the younger members of the group occasionally have a little food kept for them by their mothers. The consideration shown them as children depends on whether there are others younger

1 [i.e. From six to eleven years old – Analyst.]

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modern maternity wards have weakened the custom, since women stay in them for seven days and return home after having shown the baby to many of their friends.

Protection against witches. Although Christian mothers are not affected by this kind of superstition, pagan mothers still tie things around the necks of their babies to protect them from malignant glances, these articles being attached when the children are exposed to the view of relatives and friends. Most people believe that babies can be bewitched as soon as their skin begins to darken, and the pagans believe that through magic an ill-disposed person can introduce a worm into the baby's stomach. If this occurs, the baby cries and vomits whenever it is suckled by its mother. In the past when no clothes were worn, it was believed that the mother's breast could also be bewitched. The tradition was that every living person had a beneficial worm in the stomach, and that this worm digested the food eaten. When the worm refused to digest the food, there would be serious stomach trouble which might prove fatal. When a child was bewitched it was believed that its beneficial worm had been replaced by a harmful one.

Protection against this harmful worm could supposedly be gained by scratching the body of the child (the forehead, the palm, or the flat of the foot) with some medicine, and it is still said that, if the medicine is sufficiently strong, any evil-eyed man looking at the child with the intention of bewitching it will lose his eyesight. Some fragments of bones or roots of herbs may also be worn for the same purpose. Many of these customs have disappeared in strongly Christianized areas, the Christians themselves having sometimes taken direct action to stamp them out, but nurses are still warned not to let young children play on the roadside, in order to protect their charges from being bewitched.